THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Though India has been consistently opposing the use of trade distorting subsidies which have a negative effect on trade, particularly, for agricutural exports from developing countries, India has also been emphasising the need to provide a certain degree of flexibility to developing countries especially to large agrarian economies like India, in providing subsidies or domestic support to take care of their food security, poverty alleviation and rural employment concerns.

During the mandated negotiation under Agreement on Agriculture, it is proposed to press for this demand.

WTO Meeting

5177. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to discuss, in the next WTO meeting, different issues in the interest of the country, particularly in helping the exports of Indian products both industrial and agricultural; and

(b) how do Government plan to have clear investment and competition policy quite different from such policy of the development countries?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Taking up issues in the interest of the country, particularly with a view to helping the export of Indian products, will continue to be a very important objective that will be pursued in our preparation for and participation in WTO meetings.

(b) The Government's investment policy is designed to sub-serve our national interests and requirements. As regard competition policy, Government has constituted a High Level Committee on Competition Policy and Law which is expected to submit its report by 31.5.2000.

New Exim Policy

5178. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision on new Exim Policy;

(b) Whether it will have some impact on small-scale industries and agriculture;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether this is not going to erode the concept of self reliant development;

(e) what will be the implications on multinational companies and rich nations;

(f) whether it is a fact that it will pose danger to country's food security, if so, the details thereof; and

(g) the circumstances which led Government to adopt such a policy?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes Sir, the government has announced the Revised Exim Policy on 31.03.2000. This Policy incorporates various measures to promote exports.

(b) to (d) The Policy is not likely to have an adverse impact on small scale industries and agriculture as well as on self reliant development. Government is aware of the emerging scenario for the SSI units and has taken several steps to help them become globally competitive. These include special focus on areas such as technology up-gradation, infrastructure assistance through the cluster approach, timely availability of credit, adoption of modern management practices, use of electronic infrastructure, marketing and timely information dissemination, including sensitization of small industries to the emerging challenges of trade liberalization.

(e) The amendments of the EXIM Policy announced on 31.3.2000 will have no specific implications on multi-national companies and rich nations as these amendments apply uniformally to all the countries.

(f) Sir. The Customs duties on most of the food items for which Quantitative Restrictions have been removed, have already been raised to the peak level of 35%. On rice, the duty has been raised to 80, on apples to 50%, on Maize to 50%, on wheat to 50% and on sugar to 60%.

(g) The shift in orientation from an inward to a more outward oriented EXIM Policy has been made in consonance with our liberal economic policies since 1991 and our international obligations as members of the World Trade Organisations.